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Editorial

A GENERATION THAT KNOWS NOT JOSEPH

QUESTION: Who were the twelve disciples?

ANSWER: The twelve disciples of Christ were Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Peter, Paul, Simon, Judas, James, Nebuchadnezzar, Luther, and Agamemnon.

So, according to a newspaper report, runs a question and answer in a "general knowledge" test offered recently at a certain well-established academy. Of the many answers handed in to the above question, the answer quoted is said to have been the most nearly correct.

Examples of equally ludicrous and pitiable ignorance of biblical personages, stories, and teachings may be met with on all sides. Dr. Van Dyke reports a college student's answer to the question, "What were the Epistles?" as "wives of the Apostles"! And the writer found a student, a native American from a good home, who had never heard of the parable of the Prodigal Son. This ignorance and indifference to the Bible extends also to other subjects which do not wear the new and brightly burnished tag of modernism. It includes ancient art, ancient history, ancient mythology, philosophy, poetry (but even modern poetry goes begging). It seems to forget that our modern life is founded on all these, and that we can never truly understand and prosper in the one without a knowledge and appreciation of the other. Our ways of feeling and thinking, our minds, and our imaginations are all directly beholden to the past. Our literature and our very language are so permeated and informed with both biblical and classical conceptions, that neither the one nor the other can be rightly understood without a knowledge

of both these ancient sources. We still "tantalize" and "meander," we still have our "palladiums" and our "Nestors," but our age uses these phrases and a thousand others as a farmer tills a meager farm above a mine of gold, little dreaming what he really possesses.

It is an ungracious task to seem to be at variance with apparent progress. But in seeking what may very well be good today, it is well to stop and ask: Are we not paying too high a price? Can we afford to give up the old for the new? After all is it even necessary? Cannot a sane material progress be made quite consistently with a sane regard for the long and interesting path which has brought us to the modern land?

Yes, we do indeed want to keep up with the march of modern progress, to be in sympathetic and effective familiarity with all the latest achievements and inventions of our own time; we want to be a vital part of automobiles, and wireless telegraphy, and airships, of electric toasters and curling irons, of forest conservation and presidential primaries, of the initiative, referendum, and recall; we want arts and crafts, manual training, typewriting, domestic science, and all the rest which have so enriched our elementary and high schools in recent years: but it will be a sorry day for our civilization when we have lapsed altogether into the modern, and forgotten the races of men whence we have sprung, from whom we have received as our most precious inheritance the desire and power to penetrate the veil of sense, a spiritual comprehension which could see God in the burning bush, a vivid and creative imagination which peopled the starry heavens with creatures of its fancy, conceived the Golden Age, and begot poetry and art. The material part which we received from the remote past we can well spare; but if we lose the spiritual and aesthetic part we shall be beggars in the midst of our vaunted wealth.